



Media Release

02/06/20

## **Little SERC is helping parents to make big plans to Focus on their Future**

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) is getting set to welcome the very youngest of students to the College's new crèche, Little SERC, as their parents take their first steps to return to education as adult learners, this autumn, at the Newcastle Campus.

SERC secured financial assistance of £99k from the Coastal Communities Fund organised through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to support a crèche registered to provide professional childcare for up to 26 children whilst parents are studying on the College's Restart Education and Access courses for adults looking to gain qualifications .

Heather McKee, Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support at SERC, said, "This new childcare provision at Little SERC allows local people to focus on their future by accessing education in the College, knowing that their young children are being looked after whilst parents attend tailored classes.

"We have seen delays to the project due to the Covid-19 pandemic but we plan that the crèche will be up and running this autumn. Whilst nothing is guaranteed in the current lockdown situation, we intend to be open and to be welcoming children and parents as soon as possible - so it is vital that any parent thinking of joining the adult returners courses at SERC puts their child's name down now and lets us know they are interested."

Students can apply for means-tested grants to help cover the cost of their childcare, but places are kept affordable for any student who may have to fund their child's place at Little SERC.

Newcastle woman Kelly-Ann Allan, who is currently completing the Access Course with SERC and has recently had an offer to study the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies at Stranmillis University College said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for anyone thinking of restarting their own education. One of the key barriers to participation in education and training, is a lack of affordable childcare and there is very little in the Newcastle area. It offers a fantastic opportunity for someone, just like me, who wants to take that all important step back into education."

Kelly-Ann added, "I didn't enjoy school or learning first time around and went straight to work from school and then had a family to support. When my children got up a bit, I realised I could do more, and wanted to be more than just a mum. It wasn't just for me, but for my whole family in the long term.

“Learning and teaching is very different now from when I went to school - there was little thought given to different types of learning styles and I felt bored with the teaching, I wasn’t engaged and missed out. Returning to education was a challenge but at the College, everyone is supportive. They understand that you may need to get three other people out the door in the morning before you can think about yourself, so classes start a little later. There is a lot of flexibility and that goes hand in hand with encouragement and support. The tutors are not concerned about how your education went in the past, they are focused on the future and helping you make a fresh start for yourself.”

Kelly-Ann was also Chair of the Crèche Student Engagement Team. She said, “It was fantastic to think that students played a part in the overall design of the new crèche, from the name - Little SERC - to the layout, the toys and resources and the themes which will bring the lovely Newcastle promenade and the Mourne Mountains into the room. It’s a bright, fun and stimulating area which will encourage vitally important early years play, interaction and learning. We want the children to love coming to SERC whilst their parents are here studying.”

She concluded, “My advice to anyone thinking of returning to education is to get in touch with the team at SERC and find out how you can focus on your future with a whole range of support from SERC, including a place for your children at Little SERC.”

To find out more, contact [communities@serc.ac.uk](mailto:communities@serc.ac.uk) or phone 0345 600 7555 or go [www.serc.ac.uk](http://www.serc.ac.uk)

## ENDS

For further information please contact Fidelma Glass via email [fglass@serc.ac.uk](mailto:fglass@serc.ac.uk) or call 0345 600 7555 ext 6124.

## Notes for editor

### Caption:

**Pic 1 Little SERC: South Eastern Regional College’s Little SERC crèche in the College’s Newcastle Campus, is helping parents make big plans to focus on their future:** (l-r) Kelly-Ann Allen, Access student and Chair of the Crèche Student Engagement Team, Darragh (3) with mum Michelle Kane, Access student, Heather McKee, SERC and Joe O’Neill, DAERA.

## About Coastal Communities Fund

The Coastal Communities Fund is funded by the Government with income from the Crown Estate’s marine assets. It is delivered by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

**About SERC**

South Eastern Regional College provides high quality and innovative services to almost 33,000 learners utilising our 1,000 experienced staff and specialist facilities. Services include Further and Higher Education courses, apprenticeships, professional development training, community education, online learning, tailored training for businesses, support for SMEs, Technology Transfer and IT solutions.